

Fresno County: A Profile of Poverty, Hunger & Food Assistance

Fresno County FAST FACTS

- ♦ *Fresno County ranks 4th out of 58 counties in California in poverty and 3rd in child poverty.*
- ♦ *Only 34 percent of school-aged needy children in Fresno County eat a free or reduced-price breakfast.*
- ♦ *Between January 2001 and January 2002, the unemployment rate in Fresno County remained unchanged at 16 percent.*

Despite California's economic and agricultural prosperity, one in six Californians is hungry or at serious risk of hunger—significantly worse than the nation as a whole. Hunger is a symptom of poverty; far too many families experience devastating health consequences when their low wages or modest public benefits can't cover the cost of housing, utilities and food.

Underutilization of Federal Food Programs

Even as the demand for charitable food assistance increased by 23 percent last year, federal food programs are failing to serve eligible, hungry families. Bureaucratic hassles and the stigma of receiving assistance prevent people from getting the help they need. Federal food programs—if fully utilized—are essential for fighting hunger in Fresno County.

To prevent hunger in Fresno County:

- ♦ *Write a letter in support of state legislation to eliminate red tape in the Food Stamp Program.*
- ♦ *Urge school officials to ensure that every school in Fresno County provides breakfast.*
- ♦ *Contact school and community leaders in your county about expanding the Summer Food Program so that needy children don't go hungry when school is out.*
- ♦ *Work with childcare centers and homes to ensure that children get nutritious meals through the CACFP.*

Local Demographics	Fresno	%	CA
Total Population	755,051		
Child Population (0-18)	252,000	33%	28%
Population in Poverty	183,863	24%	15%
Children in Poverty (0-18)	85,932	34%	23%

Childhood Hunger Indicators	Fresno	CA
Low Birth Weight	7.2%	6.2%
Anemia	11.3%	14.2%
Stunted Growth	7.6%	6.2%
Underweight	1.8%	2.5%
Obesity*	14.2%	13.4%

*Poverty impairs one's ability to access nutritious foods, which may cause obesity.

Fresno County Food Assistance Programs	# Eligible	# Eligible Not Serve	% Eligible Not Serve	County Rank*
Food Stamp Program	183,863	77,693	42%	42
Women, Infants and Children (WIC)	55,311	12,098	22%	33
National School Lunch Program	111,856	29,536	26%	29
School Breakfast Program	111,856	73,814	66%	41
Summer Food Service Program	111,856	84,411	75%	40
Child Care Food Program – In Centers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child Care Food Program – In Homes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Counties are ranked by underutilization of programs, so that a #1 ranking represents the county with the worst utilization

(over)

Food Stamp Program

As our nation's largest and most comprehensive nutrition assistance program, the Food Stamp Program provides an average benefit of \$75 per month to almost 2 million people in California. Citizens and legal immigrants are usually eligible if they meet certain income and asset requirements. The most basic criteria is that a household must have an income below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL).

WIC

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, a program designed for low-income women and children up to age 5. Through WIC, families receive vouchers each month for specific nutritious foods, as well as individual counseling and health care referrals. To qualify, families must live below 185 percent FPL and must be at risk of nutrition-related health problems.

School & Community Nutrition Programs

Through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, schools provide students of all ages with the nutritious meals they need in order to learn. Enrolled children who live below 130 percent FPL can receive free meals, while children living above 130 percent but below 185 percent FPL qualify for meals at a reduced price.

Through the Summer Food Service Program, schools, non-profit agencies, and recreation programs provide free lunch to students when school is not in session. Students who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch are eligible. In addition, all children in areas with over 50 percent free and reduced-price lunch enrollment are eligible for free lunch during the summer.

CACFP

The Child and Adult Care Food Program is the only program that provides funding for meals served in a childcare setting to children up to age 13 and impaired adults. Through this program, certified child care programs are reimbursed for 2 meals and 1 snack each day, with higher reimbursements for those living at or below the 185 percent FPL.

Family size	100% Federal Poverty Line (per month)	130% Federal Poverty Line (per month)	185% Federal Poverty Line (per month)
1	\$716	\$931	\$1,324
2	\$967	\$1,258	\$1,790
3	\$1,219	\$1,585	\$2,255
4	\$1,471	\$1,912	\$2,721
5	\$1,722	\$2,239	\$3,187
+1	+\$252	+\$327	+\$466

Footnotes:

1. Local Demographics, U.S. Census, 1998
2. Child Health Indicators, CA Dept. of Health Services, 1997 (Low Birth Weight, 2000, Obesity, 1999)
3. Food Stamp Program, U.S. Census Bureau and CA Dept. of Social Services, 1998
4. WIC: California WIC Association, 1999
5. School Nutrition Programs, California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division, 2000-2001
6. CACFP: Work in progress.
7. U.S. Conference of Mayor's Report on Hunger and Homelessness, 2001
8. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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